SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
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DIGITAL EDITION

Todd McFarlane & Image Comics Presents

Onward

Dedicated to Uncle Kenny McFarlane

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SPAWN THE DARK AGES 2 SUMMARY:

Certain he had earned his place in heaven for fighting so nobly in the Crusades, the Black Knight has difficulty assimilating his return to earth as Hell's pawn. Since his return he is dismayed to see that his people, the peasants, have endured greater hardships than even he can imagine. Meanwhile, Baron Rivalen's wife was dying. Desperate, Rivalen agrees to deliver the Dark Knight to the Three Sisters of Morrigan in exchange for his wife's health.

SPAWN THE DARK AGES

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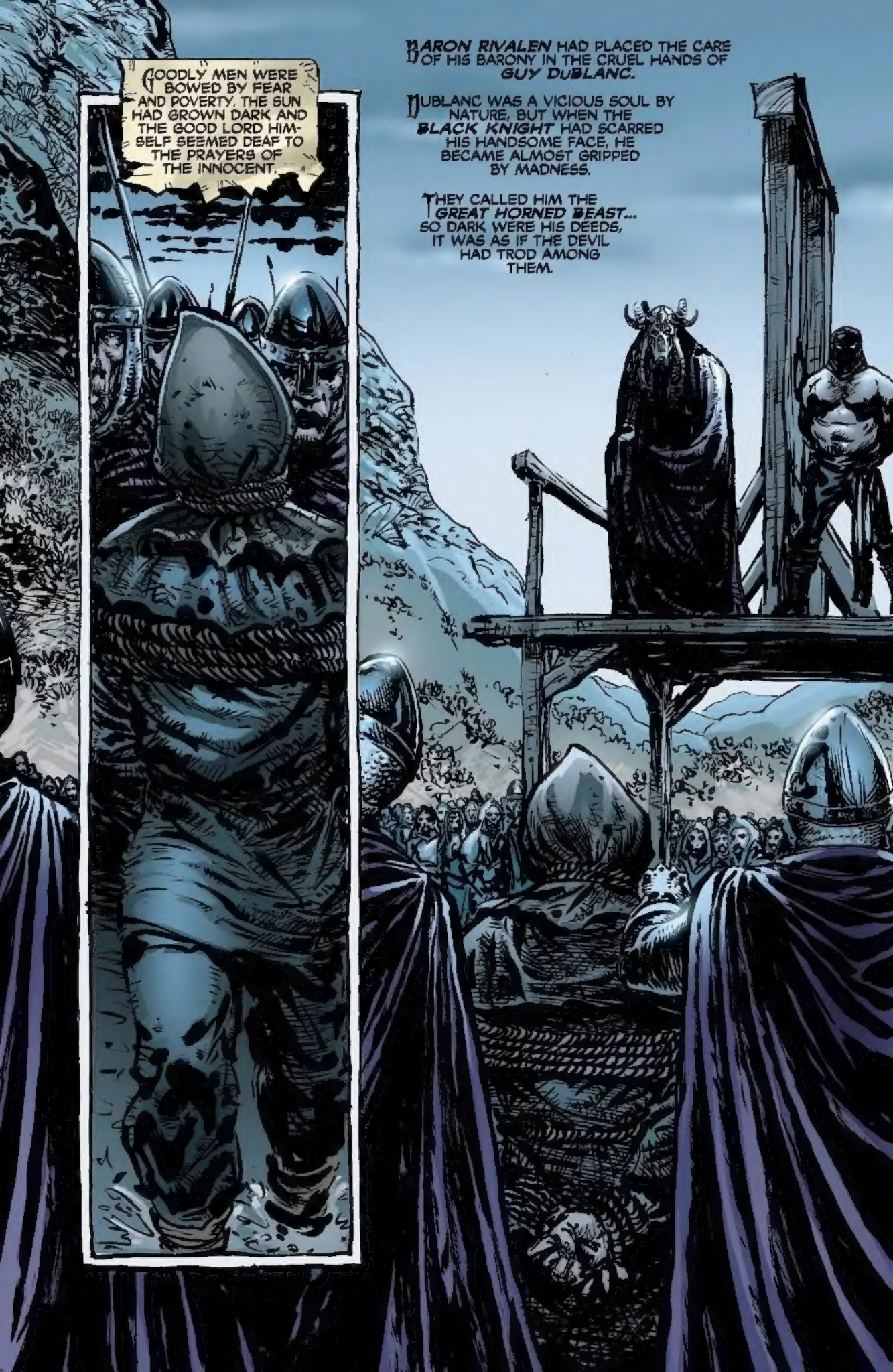
SPLASH
IT WAS A DARK HOUR IN A
DARK AGE...


GODLY MEN WERE BOWED BY FEAR AND POVERTY. THE SUN HAD GROWN DARK AND THE GOOD LORD HIMSELF SEEMED DEAF TO THE PRAYERS OF THE INNOCENT.
BARON RIVALEN HAD PLACED THE CARE OF HIS BARONY IN THE CRUEL HANDS OF GUY DUBLANC.
DUBLANC WAS A VICIOUS SOUL BY NATURE, BUT WHEN THE BLACK KNIGHT HAD SCARRED HIS HANDSOME FACE, HE BECAME ALMOST GRIPPED BY MADNESS.
THEY CALLED HIM THE GREAT HORNED BEAST... SO DARK WERE HIS DEEDS, IT WAS AS IF THE DEVIL HAD TROD AMONG THEM.

His cruelty was limitless. The price for the smallest insult or infraction was DEATH.
It was as if a great cask were split open, and blood poured out, washing the countryside in waves of scarlet.
Every plea for mercy, every anguished tear of a loved one, begot another, greater, injustice.
Beneath his great horned helm, Dublanc laughed to himself.

There is only so much that any man can take, be he king or serf, pope or peasant.
They had lost their land and their homes and their crops. They had lost fathers and brothers and sons, their eyes put out, their ears cut off, their women violated.
They met in secret, in the forest of *Rhyll* and spoke of rebellion.
They spoke of rising from the dust of their penury, of casting off the shackles of despair.
Their spirits were bold, these honest sons of English soil, but they knew nothing of war.
Alas, there was no one to lead them...

THE BLACK KNIGHT HAD NOT BEEN SEEN FOR A FORTNIGHT.

WHAT I NOW SPEAK OF, I SPEAK TRULY.
THE HELLSPAWN WAS HELD IN THRALL, BY THREE STRANGE CREATURES.
THREE WEIRD SISTERS BLACK AS NIGHT, GOLD AS DAWN, AND RED AS BLOOD THEY WERE. HELLBORNE AGENTS OF THE DEVIL OR PAGAN WITCHES OF OLD, I CANNOT SAY.
BUT THEY FOUND KEEN SPORT IN THEIR HOSTAGE.
THEY SOUGHT THE SECRETS OF THE HELLSPAWN. SUCH POWER WAS IRRESISTIBLE.

MEMORIES LEAKED FORTH FROM HIM LIKE A DRIPPING WOUND...
THE HANDSOME LORD COVENANT ANSWERED THE CALL OF ROME AND LIT OFF TO THE HOLY LANDS TO SHED HEATHEN BLOOD.
BUT HE HAD LEFT BEHIND A SECRET SIN. A GIRL, BLOSSOMING WITH CHILD. SHIANN, WAS HER NAME. THE HANDMAIDEN OF HIS SISTER ELOISE.
BEFORE HE LEFT, HE GAVE SHIANN A GIFT. AN OLD FAMILY TRINKET, A CHARM...
...CARVED FROM THE ONE TRUE CROSS THEY SAID.
IT WOULD SAFEGUARD HER FROM HARM.
UNKNOWN TO COVENANT, SHIANN WOULD DIE IN CHILD-BIRTH.

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MORE. TELL ME MORE.
LORD COVENANT HAD LEFT HIS LANDS IN THE CARE OF HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, BARON RIVALEN, AND HEADED OUT ON THE DUSTY ROAD TO DAMASCUS.
THE ARMIES OF CHRISTENDOM CUT A BLOODY SWATH ACROSS LANDS OF THE INFIDEL. THE GODLESS HORDES OF SALADIN FELL LIKE HAILSTONES BEFORE THEIR FEET.

COVENANT HAD THOUGHT THEY WERE DOING GOD'S WORK. THE HIGH PRIEST OF ROME HAD SAID AS MUCH.
BUT HIS SPIRIT WAS WEAKENED BY THE ATROCITIES HE SAW DONE IN THE NAME OF *THE HOLY SEE*. THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN MURDERED, THE OLD PEOPLE BURNED ALIVE IN THEIR HOMES.
STILL HE SOLDIERED ON.
DEVIL'S BONES. I LIKE A MAN WHO DOESN'T THINK TOO MUCH...

FOR WEEKS THEY PRODDED AND PULLED AT HIM, RAN RAZORED FINGERS ALONG HIS SOUL, THE SISTERS THREE LAUGHING TO THEMSELVES.
PULLING EACH PAINFUL SECRET FROM HIM, ONE BY ONE, LIKE CARRION BIRDS PICKING AT THE BONES OF A DOG'S CARCASS.
FOR DAY UPON NIGHT UPON DAY, HE BORE THE SUFFERING WITHOUT COMPLAINT.
BUT THEN CAME A DAY WHEN HE HAD REACHED HIS LIMIT. A SMALL, COARSE WHISPER ESCAPED HIS LIPS...
HELP ME...

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AND ONCE AGAIN, HE FOUND HIMSELF FLOATING BETWEEN WORLDS, REACHING OUT BETWEEN THE CURTAINS OF NIGHT, LOSING HIMSELF AMONGST ITS SABLE FOLDS.
MOVING ACROSS TIME AND DISTANCE BY MEANS OF HIS FELL-BORNE MAGICKS.
CONGRATULATIONS, OLD SON. YOU'VE MANAGED TO LEARN YOUR FIRST TRICK. IT'S CALLED TELEPORTATION. BLOODY HURTS, DON'T IT?
UUGHNN...
YOU FELL INTO A TRAP, BOYO. THOSE FERLIES ARE DAMN BLOODY DANGEROUS. WATCH YOURSELF NEXT TIME.
I WANT YOU TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS MESS...

I-I KNOW WHO I AM. THIS IS MY HOME, MY PEOPLE. THEY ARE DYING...
THESE *WERE* YOUR PEOPLE. THEY'RE NOTHING BUT FODDER FOR THE GRAVEKEEPER NOW. THERE IS *NO ONE* LIKE YOU NOW. NO ONE EXCEPT *ME*.
WE'VE PONCED AROUND LONG ENOUGH, HELLSPAWN. WE MUST BEGIN YOUR TRAINING. TRUST ME.

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LEAGUES AWAY, THE HALLS OF RIVALEN'S COURT SHOOK WITH THE ECHOES OF HIS DESPAIR.
HIS WIFE, ELOISE, WHO HAD LINGERED BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH FOR SO LONG, HAD AT LAST PASSED THROUGH THE FINAL VEIL.
KIND, FAIR ELOISE. HER ONCE-GLITTERING EYES WERE CLOUDED AND BLANK, HER SWEET LIPS HAD GROWN COLD.
NOOO!
RIVALEN CURSED ALL OF CREATION FOR HER LOSS.

IN THE LANDS OF RHYLL, WHISPERS OF REBELLION WERE ON EVERY TONGUE.
THE YOUNG AND OLD, THE WEAK AND STRONG.
THE POORER AND THE POORER.
BUT WHAT DID THESE SIMPLE FOLK KNOW OF BATTLE? THEIR GREATEST ENEMIES HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE MURDERING COLD OF WINTER AND STABBING PAINS OF HUNGER.
THEY WERE NOT AN ARMY.

BUT THE ORPHAN BOY PEVVYN WAS STILL YOUNG AND FOOLISH ENOUGH TO FIND ADVERTURE IN ALL OF THIS.
HE HAD GROWN UP WITHOUT MOTHER OR FATHER AND HAD ALWAYS HAD THE WANDERLUST IN HIM.
TALK OF BATTLES AND SIEGES ONLY MADE THOSE BOYISH DREAMS STRONGER.
BUT THIS WAS NO GAME. THIS WAS REAL.
WHO?
I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE THE BLACK KNIGHT. THE ONE FROM THE PUB. HAVE YOU... HAVE YOU COME TO HELP US, THEN?
LISTEN TO ME BOY. LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY.

WHEN HIS WIFE HAD DIED, THE LAST OF RIVALEN'S HUMANITY DIED WITH HER.
THERE WAS NO DROP OF MERCY IN HIM NOW.
HE CALLED FORTH HIS GREAT HORNED BEAST.
DUBLANC? KILL THEM. KILL THEM ALL.
AYE.

MEANWHILE, IN RHYLL, THE NEWS SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE. IN EVERY FIELD AND EVERY SMITHY, IN EVERY PUB AND AT EVERY CROSS ROAD, THE NEWS WAS PASSED.
LORD COVENANT HAD AT LONG LAST RETURNED FROM HIS TRAVELS.
THEY WERE TO GATHER AT THE OLD KEEP AND HEAR HIM SPEAK. THEIR PRAYERS HAD BEEN ANSWERED. HE CERTAINLY WOULD LEAD THEM OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

THE HELLSPAWN LOOKED OUT OF THE SEA OF FACES AND FELT LIKE A MAN AGAIN.
THE WORDS CAME SLOW AT FIRST AND CAUGHT IN HIS THROAT LIKE SPLINTERED BONES.
BUT SOON, HIS WORDS FLOWED LIKE HONEY.
-- I HAVE SEEN THE WORLD AND HAVE SEEN BEYOND IT. I HAVE SEEN THE BLOOD OF INNOCENTS SPILT WHILE AN IDLE GOD STOOD BY AND DID NOTHING.
BUT I HAVE SEEN THE LAST FLICKER OF HOPE BLAZE LIKE A STAR AGAINST THE COMING OF THE BLACKEST NIGHT.
LIGHT A FIRE IN YOUR BELLIES, LADS. LET IT BURN THROUGH YOUR BONES. KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALIVE. DO NOT HOLD YOUR HONOR CHEAPLY. EVEN THE HUMBLEST AMONG YOU IS STILL A MAN.
CAST OFF THE SHACKLES OF TYRANNY, BE THEY MADE BY MAN OR DEVIL. AND MAKE THIS VOW: THAT YOU SHALL TAKE NOT ANOTHER BREATH, LEST IT BE AS A FREEMAN!
AYE! AYE! HUZZAH!

YOU ARE A FOOL, BOYO. YOU PLAY AT CHILDREN'S GAMES. YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM, ANYMORE
GO TO HELL, OLD MAN.

ONWARD!
To Be Continued

Darkness